

Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group
Summary Meeting minutes
January 28, 2003

Members present: Merion Green, Fran Hawkins, Berneice Howard, Tolu Odunlami, Anita Summerour

Interested Parties: Krista Middlebrooks, Anita Neal, Reginald Yirenkyi, George Young

Staff: Judy Christensen, Randy Clay, Victor Sajauskas, Jim Wasilak

Opening Remarks/Administrative Items

Chairman Tolu Odunlami opened the meeting, and expressed his desire to complete the meeting due to the State of the Union address. Jim Wasilak hoped that everyone had a chance to review the minutes, and asked for any comments to ensure that the minutes are accurate. He noted that the environmental handout that was distributed at the January 9 meeting was also sent to all members as part of the minutes for that meeting. He also pointed out that the draft Historic Preservation chapter of the Plan, written by Judy Christensen, was also sent to all members. Comments can be given to Jim at the next meeting. Berneice Howard stated that the chapter was very interesting, and thanked Judy for writing it. Because there were guest speakers, everyone introduced themselves.

Judy explained some points in the draft chapter. There will be design guidelines resulting from the historical survey and the community process, regardless of whether it is determined that a Neighborhood Conservation District, Historic District or National Register District is approved for the neighborhood. She also distributed copies of the Architectural Guidelines for the West End Historic District, as an example of what those might look like. She also distributed a folder with loose-leaf information regarding historic designation in the City. Judy discussed the tax benefits potentially resulting from historic designation, which are 20 percent of the cost of renovation from the state in the form of a credit on state income tax, and 10 percent of the exterior maintenance from the County in the form of a refund of property taxes. Fran Hawkins asked how old a house must be, and Judy responded that the federal standard is 50 years. Another criteria is whether the property had a role in a community. She emphasized that Lincoln Park's historic designation relates more to social history rather than architectural significance. Judy also distributed a copy of the draft letter that will be sent out to property owners in advance of the historic survey that will begin this spring.

Judy went on to explain about designations. If Lincoln Park is designated a National Register district, it must be found to demonstrate significance, such as how the community got around the limitations of the time to construct the community. If a property owner wants to take advantage of tax credits, improvements must be in accordance with standards, as if it were in a historic district. These standards for new houses would make sure they fit into the neighborhood. The house at the corner of Bickford Avenue and Martins Lane was cited as a poor example of new development. The new house on West Montgomery Avenue that is being constructed was also noted. Merion Green asked whether there was anything in place now to limit this, and Jim

responded that zoning requirements such as setbacks, height limitations and maximum lot coverage requirements apply

Lincoln Terrace Presentation

George Young of Rockville Housing Enterprises and Krista Middlebrooks of Mid-City Urban LLC spoke about the redevelopment of the Lincoln Terrace community, which is owned by Rockville Housing Enterprises. George stated that one of the charges that the RHE staff has been given is to revitalize Lincoln Terrace. RHE brought in experts to help determine what was possible, and eventually issued a Request for Proposals to redevelop the community. The option that was chosen was in the form of ownership rather than rental.

Krista began by stating that Mid-City has been pleased to work with the community and George on this project. Mid-City is located in Silver Spring, although the firm does projects all over the country, and wanted to do a project near home. The model is somewhat new to the firm and to revitalization, especially housing authorities and HUD. It involves transforming rental public housing into homeownership opportunities. The proposal would replace the 65 units that currently exist at Lincoln Terrace with 60 mixed-income units. The split of the units' pricing is for those earning less than 50 percent of the regions median income, 80 percent of the median income and above 80 percent, which is considered market rate. There is an equal distribution among the income levels.

Krista described the plan as shown on the renderings. The goal is to relate the new development to the historical and social history of Lincoln Park, and the firm held a design process with the community. There would be townhouses, duplexes and single-family cottages. One of the challenges is to maintain the same amount of units on the site. The townhouses are in the center of the site, with single-family homes closest to the existing homes in the neighborhood. Retention of the green space is also an important consideration, along with having the units front on the street. One of the site challenges is accommodating the stormwater retention pond on the site.

Krista also presented the architectural designs that have been generated to date. The architecture is based on the existing homes within the community. The cottage or bungalows would have three to four bedrooms. The duplexes are based on designs that the firm has used in other locations, but is flexible enough to allow the facades to relate to the existing homes. The townhouse designs would be a combination of three to four bedroom homes, with most being three bedrooms. The goal is to sell homes to a range of incomes, including \$135,000 for the low-income units, \$175,000 for the moderate-income units and \$205,000 for the market-rate units. Ownership for the lower income units would be through the Federal governments Section 8 Homeownership Program, which is similar to the Section 8 rental program. The Federal Government would make payments toward homeownership of these units rather than rental payments. RHE would also help out with this program. Mid-City has committed to working with prospective homeowners to ensure they are ready for ownership.

George emphasized that public housing is not going away, but is being revitalized. The 65 units will continue to be provided in other locations and eventually brought back to the site as it is allowed. He also stated that Rockville is authorized to have 169 public housing units, and cannot create more than 169 units. These can be scattered around Rockville. A total of 65 vouchers will be issued to relocate the current tenants from Lincoln Terrace. A voucher is a certificate that allows the holder to rent from a private landlord. The number of families served will actually increase with the issuing of the vouchers. Mid-City and RHE will work with those residents that do not want to participate in the voucher program to find units and potentially bring them back to Lincoln Terrace. Fran asked if there are any restrictions on who can apply, and George responded that anyone could apply, with the preference being Rockville residents, and the Montgomery County residents. There are no such restrictions on the market rate units.

Krista emphasized that the renderings are conceptual, although the developer intends to retain the character shown. It was pointed out that property values would increase when the project is built. Krista passed out conceptual floor plans, emphasizing that they are conceptual. Merion asked whether the stormwater management pond would be wet or dry, and Krista answered that she did not know at this time. Merion said it would be better as a wet pond, as the dry ponds frequently are unattractive. Tolu asked what stage the project is in, and Krista answered that as soon as HUD approves the project, they will file a Planned Residential Unit (PRU) application with the City. He also asked about the future population, and Krista responded that this will depend on the number of bedrooms.

Code Enforcement Discussion

Victor Sajauskas, who runs the Code Enforcement division, explained that this division accomplishes the rental inspection, community enhancement inspection and commercial code inspection for the City. He noted that there are 32 rental licenses in Lincoln Park currently, which is a decrease over the past few years. Rental units are licensed for two years, with external and internal inspections. Community enhancement inspections are a house-to-house exterior inspection, and Chuck Aubertin is the inspector for the area. He is available to meet with the civic association. He is no longer doing daily drive-throughs of Lincoln Park because the properties are maintained well enough to warrant going to other areas. Steve Davis, the commercial inspector, drives by properties such as Maryvale Center several times per week.

Victor explained that he is looking at doing the community enhancement inspections differently, by giving attention to older neighborhoods. This may be targeted inspections in areas where some help is needed. The Property maintenance code is being reviewed by the Mayor and Council, which have discussed several issues. Currently there are no limits on the time of construction in residential areas, and more enforcement in making vacant houses appear that they are occupied. Gravel driveways are prohibited, but some residents have pre-existing gravel driveways. Staff is doing an inventory now. Some restrictions may be imposed in the future, rather than require paving. Another issue is garbage cans, and it is being recommended that there be 24-hour restrictions on garbage cans. Oversize vehicle permits are issued by the division; currently there are 5 oversize vehicles permitted in Lincoln Park. When a permit is applied for, letters are sent out notifying neighbors. If enough neighbors are concerned, a

hearing is established. One proposal under consideration is requiring signatures of neighbors when permits are submitted. The definition of an oversized vehicle was questioned, and the response was that it is anything with six wheels or more, and there are only width restrictions but not length restrictions. Lawn service trucks must be less than one ton, and permits must be applied for. Fran asked for a list of vehicles that have oversized vehicle permits. Dump trucks are not permitted in residential areas, but are permitted in the commercial areas. These and tractor-trailers are not permitted in residential areas. Berneice added that these trucks do not help sight distance when turning onto North Stonestreet Avenue. Merion added that a tractor-trailer runs early in the morning and disturbs residents every morning. Victor stated that the commercial vehicles will probably not be prohibited in residential areas. Victor promised to have his inspector concentrate on this area if he can be provided a block number. Another area is prohibiting farm animals, which are not currently restricted. Victor will be going out to the communities and getting input on the changes in the near future. Lincoln Park is being maintained much better than it had been previously.

Anita Summerour asked whether the housing inspector was taken away, and Victor clarified that the inspector still comes through but not regularly. Concerns were raised about the condition of properties along Frederick Avenue, including the auto repair garage. Frederick Avenue was the main street and has become very unattractive. Anita asked if there are inspectors on weekends, and Victor said no. Concerns were raised about construction occurring without permits, such as large additions, as well as people living in a shed.

Next Steps

Jim stated that the next meeting would be on Tuesday, February 4 at the Lincoln Park Community Center to discuss transportation and Ride-On issues. Judy added that anyone with comments on the historic preservation chapter should give them to Jim. Berneice said that the discussion on trees should continue at a future meeting.